Summer 2009

Mobility Matters

TRANSPORTATION ISSUES IN THE NJTPA REGION

Pedals & Pedestrians

Far more than a means of recreation, walking and bicycling are becoming a major mode of transportation for a growing number of New Jerseyans. Today, entire new communities are being planned around their pedestrian friendliness, a trend that's been fueled by rising energy costs, environmental awareness and greater commitments to physical fitness.

Whether they're transit-oriented developments near train stations or the kind of mixed-use projects reviving the state's urban cores, Main Street-style living arrangements have made a comeback. A new wave of residents are eager to live where they can leave the car keys behind, and work, shop and dine within a few-block walk.

In suburban and rural areas as well, local officials and residents are working hard to make their communities more attractive to pedestrians and bicyclists. Capital projects like hiking trails and sidewalk extensions are helping to stitch together neighborhoods, resulting in new travel alternatives that will improve the quality of life in their towns.

The North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA) is committed to making our region walkable and bikable for all. In this issue, *Mobility Matters* highlights some of the many projects, strategies and programs that are easing travel for pedestrians and cyclists in northern and central New Jersey.

A Core Investment Principle

The NJTPA oversees more than $2.5 billion a year in transportation investments, with more than $30 million of that going toward the construction and redesign of dedicated walking and bicycling facilities. In fact, the 2005 Regional Capital Investment Strategy—a document which outlines eight broad principles that guide the NJTPA's spending approach—placed "support walking and bicycling" among those priorities.

The most visible examples of this principle in action might be a bike trail or a pretty brick paver walkway downtown, projects that often generate enthusiasm within their communities. However, pedestrian and bicycle planning goes much deeper. Almost every kind of transportation project, from designing bridges to rebuilding highways, takes pedestrian accessibility and safety into account. Next time you drive through your town, take notice of some of its pedestrian and bicycle features—things like painted crosswalks, bus stop shelters, sidewalks, push-button crossing beacons, street signs—and consider that they often are the results of a concerted transportation planning effort.

The NJTPA Board of Trustees, chaired by Sussex County Freeholder Susan Zellman (standing), guides the investment of over $30 million each year on dedicated biking and walking facilities.

A cyclist enjoys a spin through Sandy Hook.

The NJTPA targets improvements to areas with existing, growing or strong potential for walking and bicycle travel. It also seeks to invest in projects that support walking by children, the elderly and those with limited motor vehicle access. In any given year, the requests for bicycle and pedestrian funding far outweigh the amounts available.

In recent years, a greater emphasis has been placed on

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Bergen County Executive Dennis McNerney helps promote the opening of the Hackensack River Pathway in Hackensack.

Pedals & Pedestrians
Cont'd from page 1

connecting bicyclists to transit hubs. NJ Transit currently provides parking for thousands of bikes at its facilities, including hundreds of weatherproof bike lockers that can be rented for a modest fee. Bikes are generally allowed on NJ Transit trains and light rail cars during non-rush hours, and at all times on buses with racks on the front or underfloor luggage compartments.

"Investments in bicycle and pedestrian projects accomplish many of our goals as an agency, as well as a society," said NJTPA Chairman Susan M. Zellman, a Sussex County Freeholder. "They promote healthier lifestyles, which is especially critical for our youth, and protect the environment by reducing our reliance on fossil fuels. And in some cases, these projects can also help foster smart growth and stimulate our local economies."

Safe Travel

Another of the NJTPA's guiding transportation principles, one that relates closely with the topic of this publication, is "make travel safer." Crash statistics show that the most vulnerable travelers among us—pedestrians and bicycle riders—remain disproportionately at risk. Of 439 crash-related deaths in the NJTPA region in 2007, almost 25 percent were pedestrians, even though walking accounts for less than 10 percent of all trips in the region.

The Local Safety and High Risk Rural Roads programs provide funds to the NJTPA subregions (13 counties and the cities of Newark and Jersey City) for relatively quick fixes to hazardous conditions. Over the last five years, $7.6 million has been allocated through these programs for upgrades like pedestrian signals and reflective crosswalk striping.

Walkable Community Workshops, begun as NJTPA-moderated events, have grown in popularity to a point where counties are now holding them on their own. During these half-day workshops, a group of local officials, engineers, police, residents and other stakeholders tour trouble spots on foot before holding brainstorming sessions to come up with potential solutions. The results may be documented and submitted to the NJTPA for funding consideration.

And to protect future generations of pedestrians and bicyclists, the NJTPA supports the nationally acclaimed Safe Routes to School program (see story on page 3).

For more information on the NJTPA's efforts to improve walking and biking in the region, visit www.njtpa.org.

THE NJTPA

The NJTPA is the federally authorized Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the 6.5 million people in the 13-county northern New Jersey region. Each year, the NJTPA oversees over $2.5 billion in transportation investments. The NJTPA evaluates and approves proposed transportation improvement projects and provides a forum for interagency cooperation and public input into funding decisions. It also sponsors and conducts studies, assists county planning agencies and monitors compliance with national air quality goals. The NJTPA serves the fourth most populous MPO region in the country. The NJTPA Board consists of one elected official from each of the region's 13 counties and two largest cities, Newark and Jersey City. The Board also includes a Governor's Representative, the Commissioner of the NJ Department of Transportation, the Executive Directors of NJ Transit and the Port Authority of NY & NJ and a Citizens' Representative appointed by the Governor. NJTPA Board meetings are held bi-monthly and are open to the public.

Mobility Matters

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Making the Walk to School Fun . . . and Safe

Helping children get safely to and from school is a key goal of New Jersey's successful Safe Routes to School Program (SRTS). The state's version of the national program provides grant funding for communities to develop and implement projects – including the popular "Walking School Bus" (see sidebar) – that encourage walking and bicycling to school while also enhancing the safety of these trips.

SRTS projects not only heighten pedestrian safety awareness among motorists and schoolchildren, they also improve environmental health and quality of life by reducing traffic jams and air pollution. In addition, the program encourages healthy lifestyles among children by promoting regular physical activity to help offset the time spent in front of video games, the computer or TV.

In December of 2008, the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) awarded $3.23 million in the second round of federal SRTS funding to projects in 23 towns in 10 counties within the NJTPA region. NJTPA Central Staff reviewed nearly 170 applications for potential SRTS projects, coordinating the process with NJDOT staff. In the end, the region received 23 of the state's 31 grants.

In announcing the grants, Gov. Jon Corzine said the program enhances the state's ongoing efforts to improve pedestrian safety. Three years ago, the state developed a comprehensive, five-year $74 million initiative to improve pedestrian safety statewide. Twenty percent of that funding was dedicated to the SRTS program.

"This program is a great example of how municipalities, counties, the NJTPA, and the NJDOT can work together in a proactive and practical way to improve safety for schoolchildren and the rest of our residents," said NJTPA Chairman Susan M. Zellman, a Sussex County Freeholder. "The fact that most of the grants were awarded in the NJTPA region shows there's a real need and interest to get these safety projects done."

"This program is a great example of how municipalities, counties, the NJTPA, and the NJDOT can work together in a proactive and practical way to improve safety for schoolchildren and the rest of our residents."

—Susan Zellman
NJTPA Chairman

The latest SRTS projects funded in the NJTPA region include:

Bergen County: Demarest SRTS Project; Fort Lee Abbot Boulevard Pedestrian Pathway; Hasbrouck Heights SRTS Project; Ridgewood Village Get to School Safely Project.

Essex County: Newark Citywide SRTS Initiative.

Hudson County: Bayonne SRTS, Midtown Community School; Jersey City School Crossing Safety Improvements; West New York Safe Walk to School.

Hunterdon County: Hunterdon County SRTS (10 towns); Clinton Township SRTS Circulation Plan; Milford Borough Pedestrian Improvement Project for Hillside Avenue.

Middlesex County: New Brunswick Infrastructure Grant; New Brunswick SRTS Enforcement Program.

Monmouth County: Installation of Traffic-Calming Devices, Morningside Avenue, Union Beach.

Ocean County: Safe Routes to Midstreams Elementary School, Brick Township; SRTS Initiative in Little Egg Harbor Township.

Sussex County: Ogdensburg Walk/Bicycle Safe Access to School.

Union County: Solar-Powered LED Pedestrian Crosswalk Beacon, Cranford Township; Center Street Sidewalk, Walnut Street Pedestrian Crossing Signs and Lincoln School Walking School Bus, Garwood Borough; New Providence Walks to School.

Warren County: SRTS initiative for Oxford Township Central School.

The Walking School Bus

One increasingly popular component of the Safe Routes to School program is the Walking School Bus. These events gather groups of children for a walk to school with one or more adults coming along for "the ride." The idea is to combine safety and fun while encouraging kids (and parents) to walk, instead of riding a traditional school bus or being driven to school.

In some towns, the Walking School Bus simply involves a handful of parents who take turns walking neighborhood kids to school. In other locations, PTAs, schools, families and others plan a more elaborate program, complete with a planned route and timetables, "bus stops" at which the line of walking bus "passengers" pauses to allow others to join, specially decorated posters and props, and a team of trained volunteers to help supervise. An alternate version of this concept is to organize bicycle trains along the route to school. For more information visit, saferoutesinfo.org.

NJ to Debut Cutting-Edge Traffic Technologies

Gazing out the window of an English pub, a light bulb went on in Richard Nassi's head—three actually, in an arrangement that would become one of the most statistically effective traffic signals in America.

Nassi was traveling with his wife, who was in the U.K. on business, but his mind was on a terrible crash that occurred back home in Tucson, Ariz. Five youths were struck by a vehicle while crossing a street in 1998, killing two of them. The driver fled the scene and, despite the best efforts of police, was never caught.

Nassi, Tucson's traffic administrator at the time, caught a glimpse of an unconventional beacon the English call a "level crossing signal," and began jotting down notes on how it might be adapted to prevent future tragedies in Tucson. "It started there on the back of a napkin and flew across the Atlantic with me to the U.S.," he said.

The High-Intensity Activated Crosswalk (HAWK) debuted a year later in Tucson and has since spread to several other states, including an upcoming site in New Jersey. Although it is still considered an experimental technology, the HAWK will soon be listed in the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices, the standard for signs, signals and pavement markings in the U.S.

A study of HAWKs in Tucson showed crashes were reduced by 30 percent and the compliance rate by drivers was 97 percent, better than any other American traffic signal.

The HAWK consists of three lights that overhang traffic, typically at mid-block crosswalks and unsignalized intersections. The HAWK remains dark until activated by a bicyclist or pedestrian. The beacon initially flashes yellow, then shines solid yellow, warning drivers to prepare to stop. It then turns solid red while showing the pedestrian a "Walk" sign. Finally, alternating flashing red lights indicate that drivers can proceed if the pedestrian has safely crossed.

A study of HAWKs in Tucson showed crashes were reduced by 30 percent and the compliance rate by drivers was 97 percent, better than any other American traffic signal, Nassi said. The only apparent confusion by motorists—some remained stopped as the red lights flashed.

"If you're worried about delays, it's an issue," Nassi said, "but if you're worried about pedestrian safety, it doesn't hurt one bit."

Unfortunately, a fatal accident took place at what will be the first HAWK site in New Jersey. About three years ago, a mother and two children were struck by a motorist while crossing Route 27 in Roselle, killing one of the youths, according to Debbie Kingsland, a project engineer at the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT). A crosswalk and standard flashing beacon were installed at the site a few months later, but drivers still weren't yielding to pedestrians on the busy four-lane highway, according to Kingsland. A HAWK is expected to be installed on the site soon, helping people walk and bike across safely.

Another new pedestrian crossing technology that will soon see action in New Jersey is the Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon (RRFB), sometimes called the Enhancer. The RRFB was first piloted in St. Petersburg, Fla., in 2004, and was approved for interim use at crossings by the FHWA last summer. "The RRFB's very high compliance rates are previously unheard of for any device other than a full traffic signal and a 'HAWK' hybrid signal, both of which stop traffic with steady red signal indications," the FHWA noted in a memo on the beacon's approval.

The mid-block crossing beacons feature super bright LED lights that flash rapidly in a "stuttering" pattern that's hard for motorists to miss. St. Petersburg reports a 17 percent drop in pedestrian crashes since they started using RRFBs, and in observations at 19 test locations in the city, 82 percent of drivers stopped once the system was activated.

In the NJTPA region, RRFBs will be installed near the Metropark train station in Edison and on Route 4 in Elmwood Park. ●

Photo Courtesy Tucson DOT

A High-Intensity Activated Crosswalk (HAWK) beacon in Tucson, Ariz.

Photo Courtesy City of St. Petersburg

Florida Department of Transportation and St. Petersburg officials cross a street with the aid of an "Enhancer."

Enhancer beacons feature super bright, rapidly flashing LED lights that are hard for drivers to miss.

Complete Streets: Roads Designed for All Users

Streets are for more than automobiles. A "complete street" encourages walking, bicycling and transit use by all users, including children, seniors and the disabled. That's the message of a growing national movement led by citizens and local officials determined to make their communities more livable through better-designed streets.

Rooted in the efforts of California bicyclists who urged local governments to accommodate their safe travel, the complete streets movement has come to encompass a set of principles and approaches that encourages communities to design their streets to meet the needs of all users and modes.

"For too many years, we have taken it as an article of faith in the transportation design profession that our sole purpose was to move vehicles quickly and safely, so we built roadways ever wider and encouraged higher speeds," said Les Sterman, Executive Director of the St. Louis-based East-West Gateway Council of Governments, in testimony to Congress. "With each 'improvement' to make roads safer for vehicles, we made them more hostile to pedestrians, bicyclists and transit users."

Morris County Freeholder Gene Feyl stands beside the new Inamere Road Bridge in Morris Township, which includes a walkway that connects with the Patriots' Path.

The complete streets movement encourages both physical modifications and aesthetic enhancements to make streets better fit their communities. Among the changes many communities have implemented: new bicycle lanes; curb cuts; wider sidewalks; pedestrian medians; roadside improvements for public transportation, including bus shelters and bus priority traffic signals; traffic-calming measures, such as speed humps; improved landscape features like roadside trees, benches and street lighting; and new countdown lights for pedestrians at crosswalks.

The National Complete Streets Coalition was recently formed by the nonprofit Smart Growth America to advocate these principles across the country. The Washington, D.C.-based coalition consists of a broad range of transportation professionals, advocacy groups and local governments.

More than 80 jurisdictions nationwide, including 14 states, have adopted complete streets policies through legislation, internal agency policies and design manuals. Two bills are pending in Congress to require complete streets approaches in the use of federal infrastructure funding.

The philosophy is gaining ground in New Jersey.

Sussex County was one of 17 communities nationwide chosen to take part in the Activate America: Pioneering Healthier Communities initiative in 2008. The YMCA-led effort gathers public, nonprofit and private sector leaders to craft policy and environmental change strategies that encourage increased exercise and healthy eating. The team, which includes Sussex County Freeholder and NJTPA Chairman Susan Zellman, is advocating complete streets policies throughout the region.

The complete streets movement advocates that sidewalks like this one be extended to the next block to make the neighborhood more pedestrian-friendly.

"Complete streets policies improve safety, bolster economic growth and help take cars off our roads, among other benefits," Zellman said. "But there may be no greater upside than their direct link to healthy lifestyles."

New Jersey's smart growth policies, including the State Development and Redevelopment Act, are very much in keeping with complete streets principles.

Many communities have pursued complete streets approaches. Through a public-private partnership, Newark recently began a $17.5 million streetscape improvement program in its downtown, the largest such project in state history. Once finished, 56 blocks in the area of Penn Station and the Prudential Center arena will have been remade with improved sidewalks, lighting, signs, plantings, benches, trash bins and other pedestrian-friendly features.

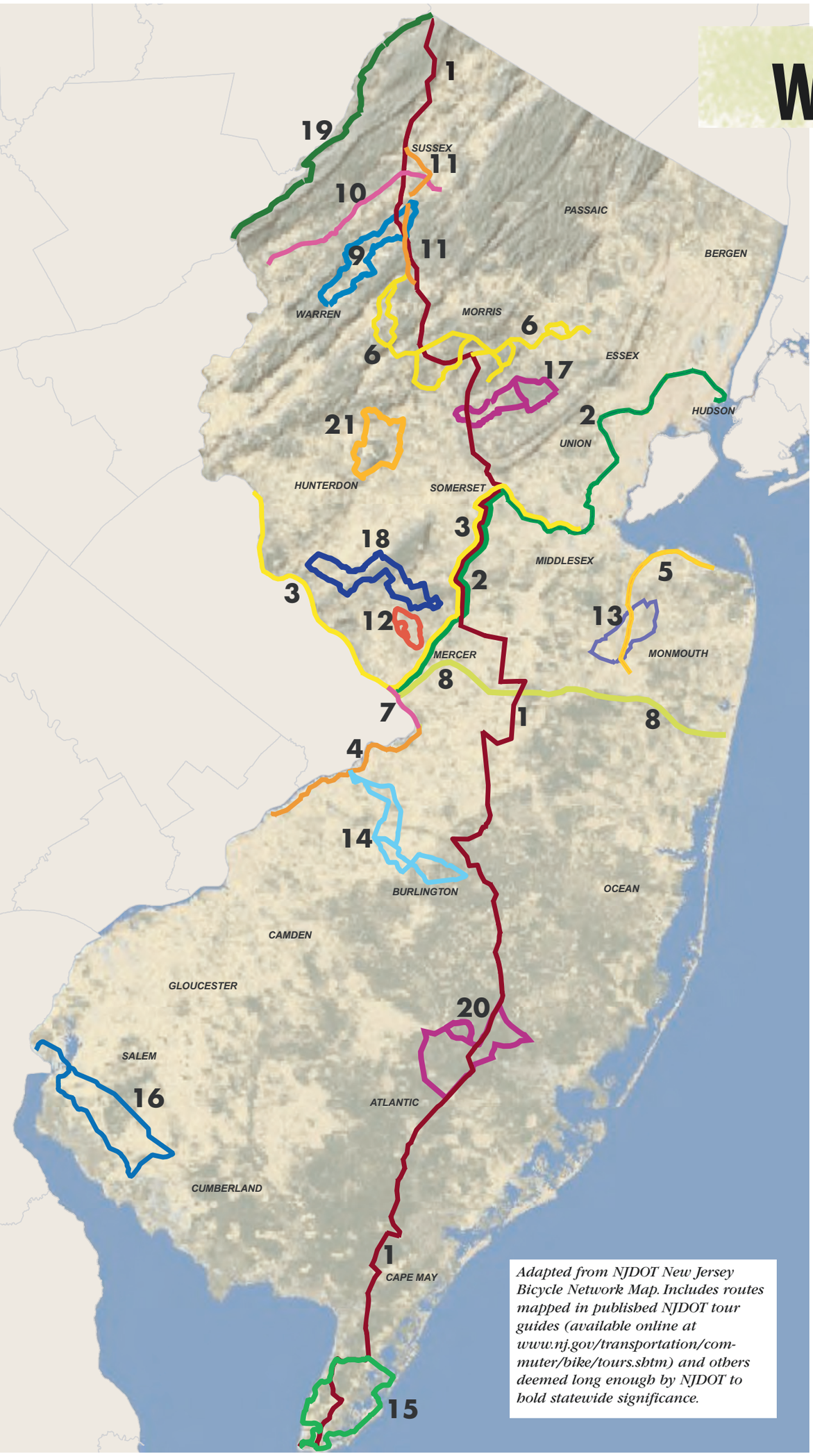
Projects for complete streets have made use of funding from the NJTPA grant programs (as highlighted in this publication) as well as a five-year, $74 million initiative to improve pedestrian safety established in 2006 by Gov. Jon Corzine.

The New Jersey Department of Transportation since 1999 has integrated "context-sensitive design" into its project development process. In keeping with the complete streets approach, it encourages transportation officials to collaborate with community stakeholders on the design of safe, efficient projects that blend in with and preserve their area's unique aesthetic and historic character.

The need for Complete Streets was underlined by the spike in gasoline prices in 2008. According to Congressional testimony by Barbara McCann, Coordinator of the National Complete Streets Coalition, the spike "led many people to realize their options for cutting back on transportation expenses were severely limited. Too many Americans live in places where they cannot walk because sidewalks are crumbling, they cannot ride a bicycle because roads are too fast and narrow, and they cannot take the bus because public transportation is inaccessible or infrequent."

For more information on the complete streets movement or the National Complete Streets Coalition, visit www.completestreets.org.

Walking and



Adapted from NJDOT New Jersey Bicycle Network Map. Includes routes mapped in published NJDOT tour guides (available online at www.nj.gov/transportation/commuter/bike/tours.shtm) and others deemed long enough by NJDOT to hold statewide significance.

1 ***High Point to Cape May Bike Route:*** A 238-mile route running from the northernmost to the southernmost reaches of the state—High Point Monument in Sussex County and the Cape May Lighthouse in Cape May County.
For more: NJDOT Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator
bicycle.advocate@dot.state.nj.us
www.njdot.nj.gov/commuter/bike

2 ***East Coast Greenway:*** The 3,000-mile greenway runs from the Florida Keys to Maine's border with Canada, passing through New Jersey for over 90 miles (see page 9 for related story).

3 ***D&R Canal:*** Delaware and Raritan Canal State Park is home to a pair of major trails. The 34-mile main route from Trenton to New Brunswick parallels a historic canal connecting the Delaware and Raritan rivers. A feeder route stretches 31 miles from Frenchtown, Hunterdon County, to Ewing, Mercer County.
For more: D&R Canal State Park
www.dandrcanal.com
dnrcanal@verizon.net
(609) 924-5705

4 ***Delaware River Heritage Trail:*** Currently under development, the trail runs on and off-road from Trenton to Palmyra, Burlington County, and extends into Pennsylvania.
For more: NJDOT Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator
bicycle.advocate@dot.state.nj.us
www.njdot.nj.gov/commuter/bike

5 ***Henry Hudson Trail:*** The original 10-mile path was built on a former railroad that crossed the Monmouth County Bayshore from

A Sample of the State's Longest Routes

Biking in the Garden State

Aberdeen to Atlantic Highlands. A southern extension from Aberdeen to downtown Freehold Borough is under construction and will double its size.
For more: Monmouth County Park System
www.monmouthcountyparks.com
info@monmouthcountyparks.com
(732) 842-4000

6 *Patriots' Path:* A network of trails linking dozens of parks and historic sites throughout Morris County. Sections of the path run along the scenic banks of the Black, Whippany and Raritan rivers.
For more: Morris County Park Commission
www.morrisparks.net
info@morrisparks.net
(973) 326-7600

7 *Route 29 Bikeway:* Currently under development, the bikeway will link several trails and waterfront facilities along the Delaware River in Mercer County.
For more: NJDOT Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator
bicycle.advocate@dot.state.nj.us
www.njdot.nj.gov/commuter/bike

8 *Capitol to the Coast Trail:* Once complete, this 50-mile route will stretch from Trenton to the shore in Manasquan, Monmouth County. The trail is under development, with some segments open to the public.
For more: NJDOT Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator
bicycle.advocate@dot.state.nj.us
www.njdot.nj.gov/commuter/bike

9 *Allamuchy Allegory Ride:* Some of the dramatic road names along this route (Hope, Shades of Death, Tranquility) inspired its offbeat name. Winds 42 miles through the New Jersey Skylands region in Warren and Sussex counties.
For more: NJDOT Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator
bicycle.advocate@dot.state.nj.us
www.njdot.nj.gov/commuter/bike

10 *Paulinskill Valley Trail:* The 27-mile trail, administered by Kittatinny Valley State Park, snakes through rural landscapes, forests, wetlands and small towns in Warren and Sussex counties.
For more: Kittatinny Valley State Park www.nj.gov/dep/parksandforests/parks/kittval.html
kittatinnyvalley@embarqmail.com
(973) 786-6445

11 *Sussex Branch Trail:* This 20-mile trail weaves through several small communities and natural areas in Sussex County, including Allamuchy Mountain State Park. Like the Paulinskill Valley Train, the route was built along a defunct railroad and is a part of Kittatinny Valley State Park.
For more: Kittatinny Valley State Park
www.nj.gov/dep/parksandforests/parks/kittval.html
kittatinnyvalley@embarqmail.com
(973) 786-6445

12 *Lawrence Hopewell Trail:* The 20-mile trail is being developed for recreation and commuting along public and private lands in Lawrence and Hopewell townships, Mercer County.
For more: Lawrence Hopewell Trail Corporation
info@lhtrail.org
(609) 734-5254
www.lhtrail.org

13 *Battle of Monmouth Ride:* Tours the area of one of George Washington's most critical victories of the American Revolution. The 28-mile route connects Holmdel County Park and Monmouth Battlefield State Park, passing through scenic Monmouth County countryside along the way.
For more: NJDOT Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator
bicycle.advocate@dot.state.nj.us
www.njdot.nj.gov/commuter/bike

14 *Burlington County Bikeways:* The Star Bicycle Factory Loop and Burlington Pinelands Loop combine for a 60-mile tour of the Pine Barrens and historic sites in the region. System comes within a mile of the High Point to Cape May Bike Route to the east.
For more: NJDOT Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator
bicycle.advocate@dot.state.nj.us
www.njdot.nj.gov/commuter/bike

15 *Cape May Shoreline Ride:* Offers riders a 48-mile glimpse of the cape's renowned lighthouses, Victorian homes, beaches, boardwalks and natural beauty.
For more: NJDOT Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator
bicycle.advocate@dot.state.nj.us
www.njdot.nj.gov/commuter/bike

16 *Cumberland Salem Revolution:* Starts at Fort Mott State Park, built on the Delaware River before the Spanish-American war to guard against a European invasion. The 52-mile route also passes Revolutionary War historic sites, the 500-year-old Salem Oak and a prison and cemetery for Confederate soldiers.
For more: NJDOT Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator
bicycle.advocate@dot.state.nj.us
www.njdot.nj.gov/commuter/bike

17 *Great Swamp Ride:* A pair of looping trails that ride through and around the Great Swamp National Wildlife Refuge for a combined 42 miles in Morris and Somerset counties.
For more: NJDOT Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator
bicycle.advocate@dot.state.nj.us
www.njdot.nj.gov/commuter/bike

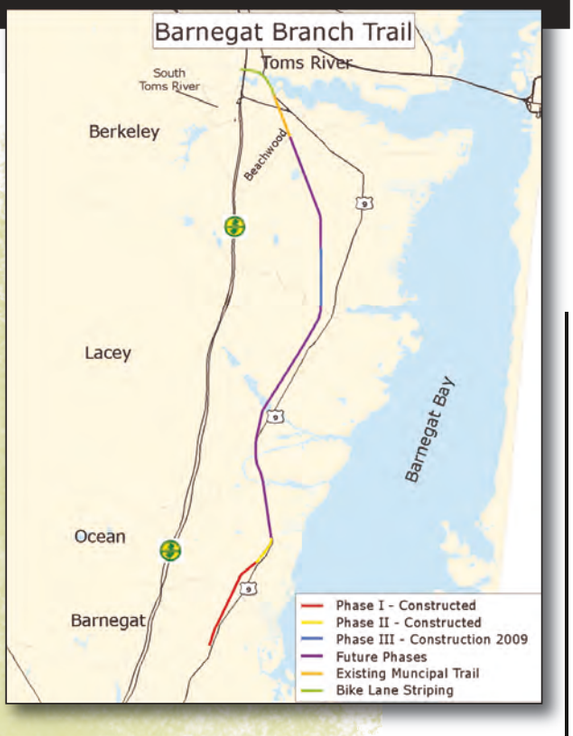
18 *Last Covered Bridge Ride:* Named after Green Sergeant's Covered Bridge, the state's only remaining 19th century covered bridge. The ride can be divided into three looping routes (15, 24 and 48 miles long), all of which pass the Hunterdon County structure.
For more: NJDOT Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator
bicycle.advocate@dot.state.nj.us
www.njdot.nj.gov/commuter/bike

19 *Old Mine Road Ride:* Follows the Delaware River 42 miles from the Delaware Water Gap to Port Jervis, N.Y., along Old Mine Road, built by Dutch settlers in the 1600s.
For more: NJDOT Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator
bicycle.advocate@dot.state.nj.us
www.njdot.nj.gov/commuter/bike

20 *Pine Barrens River Ramble:* Tour begins at historic Batsto Village and passes through the 1.1 million-acre Pine Barrens National Reserve for 42 miles.
For more: NJDOT Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator
bicycle.advocate@dot.state.nj.us
www.njdot.nj.gov/commuter/bike

21 *Round Valley Roundabout:* The 29-mile roundabout circles the Round Valley Reservoir and some of northeastern Hunterdon County's serene countryside.
For more: NJDOT Bicycle and Pedestrian Coordinator
bicycle.advocate@dot.state.nj.us
www.njdot.nj.gov/commuter/bike

Ocean County Trail to Retrace Tracks of Historic Railroad



This rail-trail has a tale to tell.

Ocean County is making strides on its Barnegat Branch Trail, a 15.6-mile pedestrian/bike route that will link Barnegat Township to Toms River along an abandoned freight and passenger railroad. The trail will be lined with interpretive signs sharing the colorful history of the railroad, as well as the unique towns, environmental features and landmarks it passes.

According to an historical chronology included in the trail's 2007 Conceptual Plan, the Toms River & Waretown Railroad (TR&W) was founded in the 1870s by Toms River investors who banked on the pine-lined villages around the Barnegat Bay ballooning into wildly popular resorts and industrial towns. They didn't. The Central Railroad of New Jersey (CNJ) bought the TR&W at a foreclosure sale in 1893 and operated the line as its Barnegat Branch Division. CNJ ran passenger service with mixed success until 1953, stopping at stations like Beachwood, Pinewald, Waretown, Forked River and Lanoka. But like so many other railroads of the era, the emergence of the automobile—and Route 9, in this case—financially strained the line.

While passenger service struggled, a series of freight jobs kept the railroad busy enough to stay solvent. Clients included farmers shipping cranberries, tomatoes and other produce; sand mining operations; the Toms River Chemical Company (later Ceiba-Geigy), which opened in 1952; and construction of the Oyster Creek nuclear plant in Lacey in the 1960s. However, trucks steadily took the trains' place with the help of the county's developing road system.

Conrail took control of the railroad in 1974 and tore out most of its tracks a few years later. Today, little evidence of the railroad's century of service remains. According to the Conceptual Plan, an old freight depot, built in downtown Toms River in 1868, is the only remaining structure once involved in the railroad's regular operations.

"As the county's population grows, the Barnegat Branch Trail will play an increasingly vital role in meeting recreational and alternative transportation objectives."

—James Lacey
Ocean County Freeholder

"Tons of people are using the trail now and they're probably not even aware of its history, so we're really excited to get that out there," Ocean County Assistant Planner Lee Dashti said.

Visitor centers along the trail will include historical exhibits, restrooms, parking, picnic areas and other amenities. According to plans, facilities on the trail will be designed in a style reminiscent of the passenger and freight stations that once served the railroad. Beyond the trail's role as a recreational asset, county officials feel it will boost the economy.

"The Barnegat Branch Trail is readily accessible to the almost 170,000 residents of the seven host municipalities and will be within a short drive of Ocean County's population of almost 600,000," Ocean County Freeholder and NJTPA Board member James Lacey said. "As the county's population grows, the Barnegat Branch Trail will play an increasingly vital role in meeting recreational and alternative transportation objectives."

About 3 miles of the trail are now complete. Phase I, a 2-mile segment from Barnegat to Waretown, opened in October of 2007, and the trail was later extended another mile north to Route 532. For Phase III, the county plans to skip ahead a few miles north to Berkeley, where a 1.3-mile segment will be developed by the spring of 2010. Dashti said this will help the county build momentum for the project in the north and provide additional time to come up with safe designs for sections close to Route 9.

Next, the county will probably return to the trail's current end in Waretown and continue building north, Dashti said, moving ahead one phase at a time each year. The rail-trail will eventually link to an existing municipal path in Beachwood, continue north for a half-mile on dedicated bike lanes through South Toms River Borough and finish in downtown Toms River.

In March, the NJTPA Board of Trustees authorized a $150,000 study that will focus on the Barnegat Branch Trail and another rail-trail plan in New Egypt. The study will examine how pedestrian and bicycle traffic from the Barnegat Branch Trail's entrance/exit in Toms River will impact the area's busy main roads, and determine whether alternative traffic patterns or calming measures will be necessary to ensure trail users' safety.

For more on the Barnegat Branch Trail, visit www.planning.co.ocean.nj.us/transp-rail-trail.htm, call the Ocean County Department of Planning at (732) 929-2054 or e-mail ldashti@co.ocean.nj.us.

NJ Among Greenest States on East Coast Greenway

From Key West to Calais, Maine, a 2,900-mile bike route—one that cuts through the heart of the Garden State—is taking shape to link the east coast's major cities. New Jersey has joined 14 states and the District of Columbia in working to complete the East Coast Greenway (ECG), described on its website as "the nation's most ambitious long-distance urban trail project."

The route winds 95 miles through New Jersey, from Trenton northeast to Jersey City. Mike Kruimer, chair of the New Jersey Committee for the East Coast Greenway, recently rode every mile of it. On a 53-day trip with his wife, Anne, the Edison resident experienced the ambiance of small towns, vibrant city cores and plenty of nature's majestic scenery, but said it was the people who left the greatest impression.

"It's unbelievable the people you'll meet, who stop and talk to you. All of the different lifestyles, the way they look at you—these are the things that stand out the most," Kruimer said. "The Appalachian Trail gets you away from the people — the East Coast Greenway brings you to the people."

Photo Courtesy ECGA

Signs with the East Coast Greenway logo, like this one in front of the Lincoln Memorial, are becoming more common along the route.

About 47 percent of New Jersey's trail route has been constructed, the second-highest rate of any participating state.

About 47 percent of New Jersey's trail route has been constructed, the second-highest rate of any participating state. New Jersey also boasts the nation's longest completed off-road ECG segment to date, the 34-mile Delaware & Raritan Canal Towpath, which stretches from Trenton to New Brunswick. From there to Newark, users currently alternate between public roads and off-road segments, then ride the PATH train to Jersey City (plans are in place to develop a pathway between the two cities). According to Kruimer, the installation of signs throughout the New Jersey route is almost complete.

Kruimer said New Jersey is one of the most enjoyable states to ride along the ECG. He sometimes escorts riders along the trail and finds that the local beauty challenges the impressions people hold of the state.

Those continuing the trek to New York City and points north presently cross the Hudson River via ferry or the George Washington Bridge, while riders heading south over the Delaware River at Trenton should use the bike/pedestrian-friendly Calhoun Street Bridge to Morrisville, Pa.

"As the greenway develops, it will continue to draw tourism to our region. Already it is generating business for the towns it passes through and showing people from around the country sides of New Jersey they may never have known about."

—Thomas DeGise
Hudson County Executive

"As the greenway develops, it will continue to draw tourism to our region," said Hudson County Executive Thomas DeGise, a member of the NJTPA Board of Trustees. "Already it is generating business for the towns it passes through and showing people from around the country sides of New Jersey they may never have known about."

The trail's development has been spearheaded by the nonprofit East Coast Greenway Alliance, based in Rhode Island. As of November 2008, about 20 percent of the ECG's spine route was comprised of off-road trails ready for public use. For the sections awaiting completion, carefully selected roadways are currently used to link adjoining trails, according to the Alliance. The group hopes another 2,000 miles of alternate routes will one day supplement the spine route.

For more information on the East Coast Greenway, including trip planners, maps and volunteer opportunities, visit greenway.org or e-mail info@greenway.org. ●

Edison's Mike Kruimer (center) and fellow cyclists show Hudson County Executive Thomas DeGise (right) badges reflecting their travel route along the East Coast Greenway while at Lincoln Park, Jersey City. DeGise honored the riders with citations for their efforts to convince planners to include Hudson County in the scope of the trail.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Rules of Engagement

Now that the warmer weather is here, and given the price of gasoline, this could be the perfect time to incorporate biking and walking into at least some part of your daily routine. (It will also minimize the time you waste getting stuck in traffic!) However, New Jersey is the most densely populated state, and people seem to move faster than ever around here.

So before you pedal off on your bike or stride over a crosswalk, take a moment to brush up on what you need to know to help you arrive safely. Here's a little quiz you can use to help get you started (also, see next page for links and resources). Biking and walking can be a fun, green and healthy mode of travel, especially for shorter trips. But just like when you're behind the wheel of a motor vehicle, it's your responsibility to know the "rules of the road."

For each question, select one answer. Answer key is at bottom of page.

1. If there's no sidewalk, state law requires pedestrians, whenever possible, to walk along which side of the roadway?
   a. With the flow of traffic
   b. Against the flow of traffic
   c. Either is permitted

2. When are standard-frame bicycles* permitted on NJ Transit trains?
   a. They're not
   b. At the discretion of train crews during off-peak hours, non-holidays
   c. All the time

3. As a pedestrian, state law requires you to yield to drivers when you're crossing the road where there's no intersection or crosswalk. True or false?
   a. False
   b. True

4. State law requires drivers to yield to pedestrians who …
   a. Are drunk, impaired or sleepwalking
   b. Are in the process of crossing a sidewalk or driveway, or are crossing a roadway at an intersection where there are no traffic signals and/or crosswalks
   c. Are texting furiously on their Blackberries and walking into traffic without a clue

5. NJ Transit has a program called "Rack n' Roll." This program . . .
   a. Allows commuters to organize "open mic" events on trains or buses
   b. Offers bike racks on the front of many buses, except non-articulated buses (those long buses which bend in the middle)
   c. Allows commuters to hang bikes from luggage racks in standard train cars

6. As a pedestrian, under state law, you must . . .
   a. Assume drivers are watching out for you, since you always have the right of way no matter what
   b. Take care not to suddenly move into the path of a closely approaching vehicle that does not have sufficient time to yield to a pedestrians
   c. Wear garish clothing so motorists will be sure to see you

7. In New Jersey, the law states a bicyclist must obey all state and local automobile driving laws. In addition, every person riding a bicycle on a roadway shall ride . . .
   a. As near to the left roadside as practicable, exercising due care when passing a standing vehicle or one proceeding in the opposite direction
   b. As near to the right roadside as practicable, exercising due care when passing a standing vehicle or one proceeding in the same direction
   c. With reckless abandon or however they wish

8. When driving, you may not overtake or pass any vehicle that has stopped at an intersection or crosswalk to permit a pedestrian or bicyclist to safely cross the roadway.
   a. False
   b. True
   c. Could you repeat that? I just blew through the last intersection because I was on my cell phone.

9. When permitted by NJ Transit, only two bikes are allowed per train car. If space is not available, bicyclists must . . .
   a. Flip a coin to decide who rides and who doesn't
   b. Wait for the next available train (they must also move to another car or wait for the next train if a person with a disability requests the accessible space)
   c. Ride on the roof

10. Bonus question: Are the following facts true or false? Half of NJ Transit's bus fleet is now bike-friendly; NJ Transit currently provides parking capacity for about 2,300 bikes at its public facilities, with bike racks located at about 90 percent of its train stations; in a typical year, about 150 pedestrian fatalities are recorded in New Jersey.
   a. All are false
   b. All are true
   c. I would prefer not to answer; I don't do very well on tests.

* Folding/collapsible bikes will be accommodated on NJ Transit trains at all times.

Answer key: The correct answer for each question is "b." Visit the NJ Transit and NJDOT websites for lots of additional information, facts and resources.

Additional Links and Resources

Bicycle-Pedestrian Planning at the NJTPA

www.njtpa.org

The NJTPA is committed to promoting walking and biking in the 13-county northern and central New Jersey region. Its goal is to make these two travel modes convenient, safe, efficient and attractive as viable alternatives to cars for shorter trips. Much of this commitment is made through direct investment in bicycle pedestrian facilities. In addition, various transportation projects, such as bridge replacements and intersection improvements, incorporate features to make walking and biking safer and more attractive travel options in the region. Visit njtpa.org point the cursor to the "Planning for the Future" tab, then scroll down to "Planning Topics" and across to "Bicycle/Pedestrian" for more information.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center

www.pedbikeinfo.org

This federally funded site offers a comprehensive and practical Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center. Pedbikeinfo.org's mission is to improve the quality of life in communities through the promotion of safe walking and bicycling as a viable means of transportation and physical activity. Through a group of comprehensive websites, it offers information and training to diverse audiences about health and safety, engineering, advocacy, education, enforcement, access and mobility as it relates to pedestrians and bicyclists.

NJDOT's Pedestrian Safety Resources

www.state.nj.us/transportation/commuter/pedsafety / (links to "Pedestrian Safety Overview" page)

The New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) has made pedestrian safety a top priority. Through this website, pedestrians can increase awareness of general safety, the safest use of pedestrian traffic signals and crosswalks, and the state's rules governing the responsibilities of pedestrians and drivers. Links to national statistics found on other sites are also provided.

NJDOT's Biking Resources

www.state.nj.us/transportation/ commuter/bike/ (links to NJDOT's "Biking in New Jersey Overview" page)

New Jersey encourages adults and children to take advantage of the many opportunities to bicycle for both commuting and recreation. The New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT) website offers children, parents and teachers information on safe biking events around the state, downloadable tour guides and related publications. This site also offers additional resources for use by transportation professionals in planning projects to promote biking.

New Jersey Division of Highway Traffic Safety

www.state.nj.us/lps/hts/bike.html (links to Division's "Bicycle Safety" page)

The Division of Highway Traffic Safety assists county, municipal and law enforcement agencies with education, public awareness and enforcement of the bicycle helmet law and other bicycle safety issues. Each year, bicyclists are killed or injured in New Jersey due to bicycle crashes. Many bicycle deaths result from bicycle-motor vehicle collisions. However, injuries can happen anywhere, including parks, bike paths and driveways, and often do not involve motor vehicles. This site not only features safety tips for bicyclists, it also collects a series of useful links to additional resources.

NJ Transit's Bike Programs

www.njtransit.com

NJ Transit supports access to its facilities and transportation services by bicycle, as well as by walking, driving or drop-off. The "Bike Aboard" program, instituted in 1992, has been continually improved. The "Rack n' Roll" program, offering bike racks on the front of transit buses, was launched in southern New Jersey in 2000 and has since widened in scope. NJTransit.com's Bike Program page can be accessed by clicking on the "Rider Guide" tab at the top, then clicking "Bike Program." This page outlines the rules for bringing bikes on trains, buses and light rail. It also provides helpful information on bike parking and safety.

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TRANSPORTATION ISSUES IN THE NJTPA REGION

Mobility Matters

In This Issue

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-*Safe Routes to School*

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